

***Dagenham  
cash in on  
Blues errors***

## By PAUL GITTINGS Wycombe Wanderers 1, Dagenham 2

WYCOMBE Wanderers slumped to their second Rothmans Isthmian League defeat in five days when they went down to the experienced Dagenham side at Loakes Park on Saturday.

Dagenham never looked back after being presented with a goal inside two minutes and added another after 17 minutes. In contrast Wycombe were well below their best and clearly have problems particularly in midfield where their indecisive approach work was the main cause of their defeat.

Wycombe were found wanting in most departments. The changes after Tuesday's 3-0 reverse at Hendon did little to improve the quality of the Blues' performance. Bobby Davies, in his first league game for the Wanderers, found the experienced Mal Harkins a real handful, particularly in the first half. John Priestley, replacing Alan Davies in midfield, made some strong runs early on, but faded as the match progressed.

Dylan Evans returned to the forward line and had a poor match, being tightly kept in check by Dagenham's Paul Currie.

Many of Wycombe's problems stemmed from their indecision and lack of invention. Too often players were caught in possession as Dagenham refused to let them settle.

Ian Pearson and Tony Horseman tried hard to inject some life up front, but both were up against a strong Dagenham back four. And they weren't helped by the poor service from

midfield. Increasingly both were forced to go deeper and deeper to fetch the ball with the effect that Wycombe, on the rare occasions when they did break quickly, had few men where it matters — in the opposition's penalty area.

It would be unjust to Dagenham to accredit Wycombe's poor showing as the sole reason for their defeat. The visitors, particularly in the opening half, showed some nice touches and indicated a willingness to attack which was refreshing from an away side. They finished third in the league last term and may well improve on that placing this season.

The crucial area of midfield was wrested from Wycombe's grip by the Dagenham trio of John Borland, Frank Saul and Jim Holder. Borland was at the heart of nearly every Dagenham attack and had an outstanding match. He linked effectively with the wily Kenny Gray and posed many problems for a somewhat hesitant Wanderers' defence.

Wycombe couldn't have made a worse start. The game was only a minute old when Howard Kennedy pushed a back pass intended for a defender straight into the path of Dagenham's Kenny Gray. He made no mistake taking his chance well from the edge of the area.

Wycombe stunned by the early goal pushed forward and Priestley twisted past three defenders before seeing his shot turned away for a corner.

But Dagenham weren't to be discouraged and hit back strongly. First Dunwell shot just over and then an effort from Saul was cleared behind for a corner on the left.

Norman Welch, a strong figure for Dagenham at centre back,

turned goalscorer when he evaded the leap of the Wycombe defender and beat Spittle to the ball to nod home the second after 17 minutes. Wycombe can reflect that Spittle could well have made the ball his, but he appeared a little unsighted.

The lead was almost cut back soon afterwards when Saul nearly headed an own goal, but most of their efforts were speculative and many promising moves became bogged down in midfield.

Dagenham were considerably sharper and a tricky run by Borland presented Gray with a chance he failed to convert. Then Mal Harkins broke strongly down the right flank and forced Spittle into a good save. And Spittle had to be on his toes just before half time when another bad back pass, this time by Paul Birdseye, put Harkins through.

Wanderers began the second half at a frenzied pace. Horseman turned well in the box but saw his shot blocked and Keith Mead temporarily deserted his defensive role to cause the Dagenham defence some difficulties.

They pulled one back 10 minutes into the second half when Pearson surged through a gap left by two defenders and was brought down by John Lye inside the box. The Wycombe striker coolly stroked home his third penalty of the season.

The home team substituted Howard Kennedy, who was the object of much derision from the crowd and appears to have lost a little confidence, with Gavin Fraser, midway through the second half. Fraser injected some life into the lackadaisical Wanderers and nearly scored with his second touch of the ball, but Dagenham were rarely troubled and always looked to be capable of claiming the two points.

Paul Currie was booked in the 80th minute for kicking the ball away and a tiring Frank Saul was replaced by Springett.

Wycombe had appeals for another penalty turned down in the last minute, but this somehow summed up their desperation.

**WYCOMBE:** P. Spittle, P. Birdseye, K. Mead, A. Phillips, R. Davies; J. Priestley; H. Kennedy (sub G. Fraser 65 mins), M. Holfield, D. Evans, I. Pearson, A. Horseman.

**DAGENHAM:** I. Huttley, J. Lye, N. Welch, D. Moore, P. Currie, J. Borland, F. Saul (sub M. Springett 76 mins), J. Holder, M. Harkins, K. Gray, J. Dunwell.

**Half-time:** 0-2. **Goalscorers:** Dagenham — Gray (2), Welch (17). Wycombe — Pearson pen (55).

**Referee:** J. Martin (Alton).

**Attendance:** 1,300.